

while I am a Republican Officeholder, I find Sinclair's proposed mandated broadcast television airing of an Anti-Kerry film during the blackout period illegal and unacceptable. It violates, not only FEC campaign rules, but FCC rules governing public broadcast licensees as well.

According to the Associated Press, 18 Democratic Senators sent a letter to the Federal Communication Commission on Monday asking that it investigate whether Sinclair's plan was an improper use of public airwaves.

"To allow a broadcasting company to air such a blatantly partisan attack in lieu of regular programming, and to classify that attack as 'news programming' as has been suggested, would violate the spirit, and we think the text, of current law and regulation," the letter said.

Mark Hyman, a vice president of corporate relations for Sinclair, Monday, called the allegation "absolutely absurd."

"Would they suggest that our reporting a car bomb in Iraq is an in-kind contribution to the Kerry campaign? Would they suggest that our reporting on job losses is an in-kind contribution to the Kerry

campaign?" he said.  
"It's the news. It  
is what it is. We're  
reporting the news."

Unfortunately, for  
Sinclair, the "it's  
just news" argument  
won't fly. The  
problem is the  
earlier mentioned  
decision by them to  
yank the Nightline  
episode where the  
names of all the  
American  
servicepeople killed  
in Iraq were read.  
In a striking note  
of irony, when  
responding in the  
Baltimore Sun to  
outrage over  
Sinclair's decision  
to pull the  
Nightline episode,  
the same Mr. Hyman  
said that ABC News  
and Ted Koppel were  
trying to: "disguise  
political speech as  
news content." When  
that earlier foray  
is combined with the  
current move, the  
clear bias inherent  
in Mr. Hyman's  
defense (not to  
mention the  
logically  
contradictory nature  
of his statements)  
and Sinclair's  
actions is obvious.  
Sinclair yanked  
another news program  
because they  
disagreed  
editorially with its  
potential  
"political" effect,  
now they are trying  
to portray the  
latest anti-Kerry  
piece as  
non-partisan news  
programming, and to  
say that as a public  
broadcast network  
they have a  
responsibility to  
simply run unbiased  
news coverage. As my  
daddy might say:  
"that dog won't

hunt, boy."

As a public broadcast network, unlike a cable only network, because they simply lease from the Federal government the public airwaves they broadcast over, Sinclair is controlled by FCC regulations imposing a public-interest requirement that requires them to at least attempt to be even-handed in its political content broadcasting. It's the same basic ethical foundation that gives us the famous "equal time" rules for political broadcasting. It is those very same "public interest" licensing requirements Sinclair may be violating here. It has already been reported elsewhere that former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt yesterday tendered a letter of concern over the required airing of the anti-Kerry film to Sinclair management.  
<[http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/week\\_2004\\_10\\_10.php#003640](http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/archives/week_2004_10_10.php#003640)>

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get

more of what's good  
for the bottom line  
and less of what we  
need for our  
democracy. Instead  
of something  
produced at "News  
Central" far away,  
it's more important  
that we see real  
people from our own  
communities and more  
substantive news  
about issues that  
matter.

Sinclair's actions  
show why we need to  
strengthen media  
ownership rules, not  
weaken them. They  
show why the license  
renewal process  
needs to involve  
more than a returned  
postcard. Thank you.